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IMPORT AND EXPORT VALUATIONS.

The following letter, dated London, May 25, 1898, is taken from *The Manufacturer*, June 4 : —

The Manufacturer for April 9th (page 16) contained a very interesting article on the difference in the official value of our exports to France, as shown in the Washington returns, and the French value of our imports into France, as shown in the French official statistics. Two samples will show the gist of the writer's contention : —

	French Statistics.	American Statistics.
1896	\$60,335,946	\$53,343,571
1897	84,038,269	73,665,199

The above are the values of the American exports to France, and the French customs officials' value of French imports from United States. The discrepancies are at once apparent.

The imports from France into United States, as shown by Washington, and France's exports to United States, as shown by the French authorities, are as under : —

	French Statistics.	American Statistics.
1896	\$43,214,520	\$55,694,541
1897	47,347,115	66,730,631

Here again we have a radical error, although where it is located is a difficult matter to say. Much the same result is seen from an examination of the British trade returns. Of course exports should have a higher value when landed at their destination ; costs, freightage, and other expenses being added. Under these circumstances I have laid the matter (so far as British statistics are concerned) before the chief of the English Customs Department, and this is his explanation : —

“ It has always been found impossible to establish a correspondence between the United States exports to this country (England), as given in their returns, and the British imports from the United States, as given in our returns. The reasons for this disagreement are numerous. In the first place it would be necessary, if both sets of figures were to correspond, that the terminology of the two countries should be identical — that is to say, that both countries should attach exactly the same meaning to the same words and

expressions in their several imports and exports lists. Thus, as regards the iron and steel manufactures, the British heading of that category does not include hardware, agricultural implements, machinery, printing presses, typewriters, etc., most of which apparently fall under the United States heading of 'iron and steel,' while the sum mentioned as the British total does not include the value for sewing machines.

"And then," continued the British statistical expert, "there is another reason for these discrepancies—the British returns are classified according to the countries whence the goods are immediately imported. In this way it is undoubted that goods really of United States origin are classified as from Canada, and *vice versa*; in the winter season when Canadian ports are closed the goods of that Dependency are imported into England as from the United States.

"The system we adopt in England is a valuation of both imports and exports according to the bills of entry and the shipping bills, false declarations being punishable by fine. In the case of imports, the control of the customs administration, at least in so far as regards those articles which are subject to duty, is a guarantee of accuracy in the returns; but as regards the exports it is different, for merchants are only required to furnish their declarations within a period of six days of the sailing of the vessel, and the only proof of their accuracy, if proof be needed, lies in an inspection of the bills of lading, the production of which the authorities have the right to demand.

"The valuation of imports and exports is checked in the statistical office of the Customs (to which a copy of the entry is sent), where the officials possess a knowledge of the current values and where market reports and lists of prices current are readily available to detect any departures from substantial accuracy in this respect. Practically, it will be seen that the important difference between the United Kingdom and other systems is that the English method shows the values at the time of import and export, while in most other countries the values are computed at the prices of a year or more before.

"For goods imported the practice adopted is generally to take the value at the port of entry, including all incidental expenses up to landing on the way. For goods consigned to the English market for sale, the market value in England is that which is sought for and which is included in the returns. This is ascertained from the dec-

laration made by the importers, and is checked by the expert knowledge available in the statistical office already mentioned. For the exports, the value at the port of shipment is taken. English statistics take cognizance only of the immediate port of origin and destination, and do not record the prime origin and ultimate destination of the goods.

“And, then, too, there is another cause of divergence between the returns of any two countries. I allude to smuggling. There is known to exist a good deal of this trade on certain frontiers, and this is carried on to such an extent as to seriously falsify the customs returns.”

I may mention that in the opinion of the Chief of the British Customs House there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the English returns, nor does he think the declarations are untrustworthy. At the same time there appears to be something quite wrong in the systems, not only of England but of France and other countries, which permits of such large discrepancies as have been pointed out in this article.

F. C. CHAPPELL.

STATEMENT OF DEATH RATES.

The following letter was sent by the office of the Division of Vital Statistics of the Department of State of Michigan in reply to an inquiry from Detroit. A paragraph relating to the filing of the certificate has been omitted.

The death rates for Detroit as printed in the *Bulletin* have been worked out with great care, and you may rely on them as entirely correct on the basis of the transcripts furnished by your office. For the month of November you reported to us 265 deaths, including 21 still-births, as occurring in the city of Detroit, and the annual rate based on this number of deaths and upon the estimated population of Detroit on basis of average annual increase between the United States census of 1890 and the State census of 1894 was 12.4 per 1000. You state that the number of deaths during November was 254, exclusive of “still-births, premature births, and bodies which have died in the city which were not residents of Detroit,” and upon this number and an estimated population of 275,000 you obtain a